



STEVEN F. McLAUGHLIN
Assemblyman 107th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

February 5, 2016

Assemblyman Richard Gottfried
LOB 822
Albany, NY 12248

Assemblyman Steve Englebright
LOB 621
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Assemblyman Gottfried and Assemblyman Englebright:

There is nothing more critical and pressing than the safety and health of New Yorkers. I'm writing to you today not only because the well-being of Hoosick Falls' residents is in jeopardy, but I believe they are the victims of the biggest environmental and health crisis, and potential cover-up, that's rocked New York State in the last decade.

This crisis has ballooned so much that it's even brought attorney Erin Brockovich to the area to meet with residents. We need your help.

Water tested near the Saint-Gobain plant in Hoosick Falls tested positive for high levels of PFOA, a chemical that has been linked to health concerns such as cancer. In fact, water tested near the Saint-Gobain plant registered at 18,000 PPT (parts per trillion). By way of comparison, New Jersey recently set its safe level in drinking water at 40 PPT.

The Mayor of Hoosick Falls brought this to the attention of the New York State Department of Health (DOH) in August 2014.

On December 10, 2015, DOH stated, "Based on our evaluation using data collected by NYS DOH in the summer of 2015, we do not expect health effects to occur from normal use of the water." DOH went as far as handing out flyers and spreading information that normal water use was fine.

Then, just one week later on December 17, 2015, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated, "While the EPA continues to gather information and assess the Hoosick Falls water contamination, it recommends that people NOT drink the water from the Hoosick Falls public water supply or use it for cooking."

In a remarkable turn of events, on January 27, 2016, Governor Cuomo, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Acting Commissioner Basil Seggos, and DOH Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker declared the Saint-Gobain facility and other potentially contaminated property as a State Superfund Site.

How does the State first determine that there are no expected health effects from normal use of the water supply, and then just weeks later announce the area has become a State Superfund Site because the water is so badly contaminated?

Who from DOH and DEC knew what, and when did they know it? When did the Mayor of Hoosick Falls inform DOH of the water supply concerns, and what steps were taken on his part to convey the urgency of this matter to the State or the residents? Was there an attempt by the Governor's administration to cover up what is becoming the next Love Canal?

As Chairmen of the Assembly Committee on Health and Assembly Committee on Environmental Conservation, respectively, you have the unique power and authority to convene a hearing – and, if necessary, issue subpoenas – to compel the individuals, government agencies and organizations involved in this epidemic to answer the above questions and more. I believe it would also be appropriate to hold the meeting jointly with any other Committee(s) as you see fit.

As I mentioned earlier, the health and safety of our constituents is one of our most pressing concerns, and the people of the State of New York have the right to know if and when they are in harm's way. It is not an exaggeration to say that people's lives are on the line.

Fortunately, we have an opportunity, through quick and decisive action on this matter, to ensure the welfare of the citizens of our State and avoid the undesirable result that could see New York branded as the next Flint, Michigan or Hoosick Falls become another Love Canal. I implore you to take swift action in convening a hearing so we can determine what has gone wrong and how we can best address the problem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven F. McLaughlin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "S" and "M".

Steven F. McLaughlin
MEMBER OF ASSEMBLY